



KEYSTONE NEWS

Operation Iraqi Freedom



Iron Soldiers ready to face tough training

Camp Shelby, Miss – The 2/28th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) arrived at their mobilization site Camp Shelby Mississippi to begin intense training as they prepare for War in Iraq.

Headquartered in Washington, Pennsylvania, the 2/28th BCT is part of the oldest division in the armed forces of the United States. The 2/28th BCT is comprised of more than 3,800 combat-ready troops from Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, Utah, Vermont and Rhode Island making this the largest combat mobilization of a Pennsylvania-headquartered National Guard unit since WWII. The 28th Infantry Division (M) has a long and proud history of fighting in all of our nation's major conflicts going back to colonial times. Elements of the division can trace their histories back to 1747 when Benjamin Franklin organized his battalion of "Associators" in Philadelphia. Although the 28th Division (M) was not mobilized in force for Desert Storm, volunteers were deployed to serve in the Middle East and other locations. Soon after the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in 1996 and extending through 2000, Division Soldiers were called upon to support NATO peacekeeping in Bosnia. The 2/28th BCT will train and mobilize at Camp Shelby, Mississippi as they prepare to do their part to fight the war on terrorism as part of "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Col. John Gronski the 2/28 BCT commander will lead his "Iron Soldiers"

through the many phases of Theater Immersion Training.

"The 2/28th BCT is highly motivated, these Iron Soldiers will be trained and ready to perform a very important mission in Iraq," said Gronski.

The goal of the Observer Control/Trainer (OB/T) at Mobilization Center Shelby is to create Iraq at Camp Shelby. We call this "Theater Immersion Training. We want Soldiers to face challenges in theater for the first time during training, not in Iraq" said Commanding General First United States Army, Lt. Gen Russell L. Honofo, during his initial meeting with the Iron Soldiers, "The more you sweat here, the less blood you will shed in Iraq," said Honofo.

Mobilization Station training is realistic. Replicating a combat zone enables focused training 24-hours a day. This immersion training allows OB/T's to create more events over longer durations that ultimately lead to Soldiers being able to respond to threats intuitively, regardless of the situation in which they might find themselves. The war on Terrorism is a war with no rear areas or front lines. "Every Soldier must be able to fight as an infantryman. Units have to be flexible, adaptive and responsive" Gronski, said.

By Capt. Alfred A. Smith – 2/28th BCT PAO
alfred.a.smith@us.army.mil



**2/28th BCT soldiers pose for pictures during their farewell ceremony at Brigade Headquarters in Washington PA. The 2/28th BCT has been activated for an 18-month deployment in Iraq. Pictured front right is HQ Company Commander Capt. Steven Fischer.
Picture by Capt. Alfred A. Smith – 2/28th BCT-PAO**



Members of the 2/28th BCT arrive at the Gulf Port Airport in Mississippi. 2/28th BCT soldiers will start their first phase of intensive “Theater Immersion Training” at Mobilization Center Shelby. Picture by Capt. Alfred A. Smith – 2/28th BCT-PAO